

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TAIPEI 08498 280816Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 280750Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2108
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 8498

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, TW
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ON TAIWAN

REF: TAIPEI 8481

1. DURING RECENT WEEKS PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE HAS FOCUSED TO AN UNUSUAL EXTENT ON THE PRACTICAL SAFEGUARDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON TAIWAN. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES HAVE REPORTED SEVERAL CASES OF USE OF "THIRD DEGREE" INTERROGATION PROCEDURES BY POLICE, AND THIS HAS GENERATED STILL OTHER ARTICLES AND CRITICISM ON THE SUBJECT. IN ADDITION, DURING THE YEAR-END CONVOCA-
TION OF THE CONTROL YUAN, THE SUBJECT OF SAFEGUARDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN POLICE AND JUDICIAL INVESTIGATIONS HAS BEEN RAISED AND GIVEN PROMINENT PRESS TREATMENT.

2. PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO HIMSELF ADDRESSED THE ISSUE OF
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PAGE 02 TAIPEI 08498 280816Z

HUMAN RIGHTS IN HIS DECEMBER 25 ADDRESS TO THE YEARLY CONVO-
CATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE PREMIER REEMPHASIZED HIS PREVIOUSLY STATED POSITION THAT "WE SHOULD NEVER WAVER OR CHANGE IN OUR DETERMINATION AND ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT CONSTI-
TUTIONAL RULE AND SAFEGUARD HUMAN RIGHTS" AND THAT "THE GOVERNMENT REQUIRES THAT ALL ITS ADMINISTRATORS ACT IN ACCORD-

ANCE WITH THIS BASIC PRINCIPLE." THERE WAS THE USUAL CAVEAT THAT "EVERYONE IS EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW AND THAT EVERYONE IS FREE WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE LAW. LAW AND SOCIETY DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO OVERSTEP THESE BOUNDARIES."

3. THE PREMIER BROKE NEW GROUND, HOWEVER, IN EXPLICITLY ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN A PUBLIC CONTEXT. HE STATED: "FOR THE 28-YEAR PERIOD FROM 1949 TO THE PRESENT, THE COUNT OF PERSONS CONVICTED OF SEDITION AND STILL SERVING PRISON TERMS IS 254. THE NUMBER OF THOSE CONVICTED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS TOTALS 95: 21 IN 1974, 41 IN 1975 AND 33 IN 1976. ONLY ONE HAS BEEN SENTENCED TO DEATH; HIS CRIME WAS SERIOUS AND HE DID NOT REPENT. OF THE OTHER 253, 27 ARE IMPRISONED FOR LIFE, 58 FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS, 111 FOR MORE THAN FIVE YEARS AND 57 FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR." HE ADDED THAT "WE WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW THE TRUTH AND WE SHALL BE GLAD TO COOPERATE WITH THE INVESTIGATION OF (SIC) ANY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT IS BASED ON GOOD WILL TOWARD US."

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WE ARE UNABLE AT THIS TIME TO CHARACTERIZE THE RECENT EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS ANYTHING MORE THAN WELCOME WINDOW DRESSING, WE BELIEVE IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE SUBJECT OF PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN TAIWAN SEEMS TO HAVE ENTERED THE REALM OF LEGITIMATE PUBLIC DEBATE FOR THE FIRST TIME. WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH UNPRECEDENTED PUBLIC ATTENTION IS DUE TO INCREASED EXPRESSIONS OF USG CONCERN ABOUT INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS, THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON TAIWAN, AND A REAL DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE PREMIER TO APPEAR SERIOUSLY CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEM.
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PAGE 03 TAIPEI 08498 280816Z

5. FULL TEXT OF PREMIER'S REMARKS HAS BEEN POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT.
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